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# CL 553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

Joe Harris

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**SPRING 2005**  
**CL553 XL UNITED METHODIST POLITY AND DISCIPLINE**

**The Rev. Dr. Joe Harris**

**Office Hours: Saturday Mornings 10:00-12:00am Central Time(Unless otherwise noted in syllabus)**  
**For personal conversations call 615-415-2319 (cell phone on weekends or after 9:pm CT).**

**WELCOME from Joe Harris:**

**Welcome to UNITED METHODIST POLITY AND DISCIPLINE! This class, CL553 XL fulfills the disciplinary requirement for all United Methodist students seeking ordination as a deacon or elder in the United Methodist Church.**

United Methodist Polity and Discipline outlines the ‘rules’ which United Methodists order their lives together. This course is more than just an ancient creedal memorization course or a set of outdated and outmoded customs and traditions, passed on through generations of United Methodists. On the other hand it is also not just a course of relativistic modern propositions designed to be relevant to today’s cultural norms devoid of the ancient witness. This Polity and Discipline course will prepare the student to understand how the United Methodist Church functions in today’s world while holding fast to the foundations of its historical and theological development.

We will deal with the ‘issues’ facing the church today, the numerous structure challenges, the ‘hard’ realities facing clergy and laity in the annual conferences and the future challenges and opportunities that United Methodist Church must face. In addition, we will explore the role of racial ethnic persons in the church, women, men, youth, Caucasians (official and unofficial), UM agencies, Council of Bishops, Judicial Council, seminaries and the effects of ecumenical groups (i.e., World Methodist Council, World and National Council of Churches, etc.) on the mission and ministries of the denomination. It is expected that by the end of this course the student will be able to articulate his/her understanding of how Polity and Discipline fit in the life of the denomination as well as how it fits into the life of the prospective United Methodist clergy person.

For some of you as well as me, this will be the first ‘on-line’ course you will have taken. In that respect we will be learning together the challenges and opportunities of ‘distance’ learning, the inevitable wave of the future in higher education. There may be times when my lecture readings are not as clear as I hope them to be or my instruction to you is not as precise as it might be if we were together in a classroom setting. I will depend on you to seek clarification when needed, ask other classmates about questions and help each other in ‘community’ wrestle with the issues we will be dealing with this semester. Because this is not a correspondence course, you will be required to interact with fellow students on a regular basis, as part of your grade evaluation.

**Purpose of the Course:** This course seeks to acquaint students with how the United Methodist Church orders and structures itself in its total life, doctrine, ministry and mission. The course purposes to fulfill the denominational requirement for polity for students seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church.

### Objectives:

- To enable you to have a working understanding of church order and practice and the practical discipline of the United Methodist Church, The 2004 Book of Discipline. This course seeks to ready you to use the Discipline as an ordained minister in a local United Methodist church.
- Where relevant, we will explore and become familiar with, analyze and evaluate the biblical and theological assumptions and historical developments that have given rise to and support the church's structure.
- In a spirit of affirmation, you will offer candid critique and visioning for the future of our United Methodist polity particularly in our use of the book The Ice Cube Is Melting.
- To enable you to become more conversant through community interaction and team involvement with discussions about current issues relating to United Methodist polity.
- To familiarize you with the structures and functions of ministry in the local congregation through the use of the Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation 2005-2008 resource.

### Course Requirements:

1. Active class participation (i.e., reading pre-assigned texts, lecture readings, note-taking, asking relevant questions, and entering into discussions, working with your team) is vital. ..  
(*Value of the final grade – 20%--20-points*).
2. Read the entire Book of Discipline (2004)). Please type and submit to me by each reading module due date on the course calendar **two** observations/reflections taken from your assigned weekly reading in the Book of Discipline. An observation is a reference to a particular sentence or paragraph in the Discipline (please cite) and your reflection should be approximately 2 paragraphs in length ( or longer if you desire). These assessment/critiques are due no later than May 7<sup>th</sup>, but should be submitted to me by the end of the module which the reading is assigned(*Value of the final grade: 20% -- 20 points*.)
3. Read Polity, Practice and the Mission by Thomas Frank. Please type and submit to me by each reading due date on the course calendar an approximately two-paragraph summary and critique (not to exceed 3/4 page in length) of **each** chapter to be read for that module. (*Value of the final grade: 10% -- 10 points*.)
4. Read The Ice Cube Is Melting by Lyle Schaller according to the assigned reading chapters for each module. This book will serve as a catalyst for many of our group and team discussions and will be a major emphasis of the final examine.
5. During the semester, attend one Church Council meeting of a local United Methodist church **other than the one you currently attend**. You are to act as a reporter and observe what organizational structure is assumed by the church. In light of ¶ 243, 244.1, 244.2 and 246.2 briefly describe in one or two paragraphs the church's organizational plan. Is it the "basic organizational plan" described in ¶244? Does it use the former Administrative Board and Council of Ministries structure? Does it use simply the old "Administrative Council" structure (which carries both the responsibilities of Administrative Board and Council of Ministries)? Does it use some alternative structure per ¶247.2 and 243? Does it run according to the provisions of ¶252? How does the church conduct its meetings and

business? What is the role of the pastor? How does the structure enhance the church mission? Submit a one page paper before the end of the semester on your observations and answers to the questions noting name of church, date attended meeting and name of pastor and Council/Board chair (*Value of final grade: 10% -- 10 points*)

5. Satisfactorily complete the following: (Value of the final grade: 20% -- 20 points.)
  - Submit a ten-page paper on an issue related to United Methodist polity. The following format must be followed or a point reduction results. You will be instructed during one of the early modules as to when the topics can be submitted for approval.
    1. Typed on 8 ½" x 11" paper, double-spaced with one-inch margins.
    2. Format of the paper:
      - a. Title Page (Title, name, professor's name, course, and date)
      - b. Introduction: Briefly give an introductory explanation of what you intend to do in the paper.
      - c. Main Body. In writing your paper:
        - State the issue and the historical development which have precipitated the issue.
        - Analyze conflicting views or positions regarding the issue by stating each one's biblical, theological, philosophical, and scientific premises. Note how terms are defined and used.
        - Argue for a position or build a case of resolution. Persuade the reader, giving reasons why this is the reasonable argument. Demonstrate the strength of your case.
      - d. Conclusion
      - e. Footnotes: Be careful to acknowledge sources either in footnotes or endnotes. These must be placed either at the bottom of each page or at the back of the paper.
      - f. Bibliography: Please include only those sources which you have consulted in your research paper.
    3. Additional Comments:
      - Copy edit (correct and revise) the first draft. Spell-check and read over for correct grammar, syntax, proper expressions, and logical flow. Expect to write two drafts before finalizing the third. Proofread the final draft.
      - Failure to turn in completed research paper by **April 30<sup>th</sup>** results in a 5% point reduction for each week late.

*\*\*For additional information on form, please consult Carole Slade's **Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports and Theses.***

**6. There will be a final objective exam that will test your ability to Work with the Discipline.** (*Value of final exam 20%-20 pts.*) *Nature and scope of exam will be explained during one of the modules.*

*Extra Credit.* Students are invited to receive extra credit by reading the 27 Guidelines for Leading your Congregation 2005-2008 and writing a critique (in the style described above) on **two** of the Guidelines and letting me know you have read the rest. (Value of extra credit 10%-10 points)

### Summary of Grading Procedure:

| A = 93-100 |      | B = 80-92   | C = 70-79 | D = below 70 |
|------------|------|---|-----------|--------------|
| A          | 4.00 | Exceptional work: outstanding/surpassing achievement of course objectives |           |              |
| A-         | 3.70 |   |           |              |
| B+         | 3.30 |   |           |              |
| B          | 3.00 | Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives           |           |              |
| B-         | 2.70 |   |           |              |
| C+         | 2.30 |   |           |              |
| C          | 2.00 | Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives        |           |              |
| C-         | 1.70 |   |           |              |
| D+         | 1.30 |   |           |              |
| D          | 1.00 | Marginal Work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives     |           |              |
| D-         | .70  |   |           |              |
| F          | 0.00 | Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives                           |           |              |

- You are strongly encouraged to read; at least three of the publications listed below, and identify current issues relating to United Methodist Polity. They may serve as the basis for your research paper, some of the community discussion or your team activity; further instructions will be given during the appropriate module. Pay particular attention to the umc.org and UMR.org websites

UM Publications:

United Methodist Reporter [www.umar.org](http://www.umar.org)

Circuit Rider

Interpreter

Quarterly Review

Newscope

Good News magazine

[www.umar.org](http://www.umar.org)

### How to Study for this Course:

The best way to study for this course in addition to reading and familiarizing yourself with the required texts is to participate in all the discussions, community activities and team assignments as well as reading carefully the posted lectures. Taking complete and careful notes will go a long way to helping you do well on the exam.

Below you will find the course calendar. We will have seven modules for this course. I will remind you during those modules about: (1) assignments due (2) discussion topics (3) team activities (4) other pertinent information.

Our course will begin on Monday February 7 at 12:00 (ET) (I live in a central time zone but will coordinate all activities on Eastern Standard Time unless otherwise noted) On that Monday, the first complete module will be accessible within the Course Center. A new module will be accessible every two weeks by noon on the dates specified. Each module will close at 11:00 p.m. (ET) on the dates specified.

## **CONTACT AND INTERACTION**

During the course of the semester, I will be available to you in a variety of different ways.

- (1) As noted above I will have materials and instructions posted on-line by 12:00 noon (ET) at the starting date of our seven modules.
- (2) I will respond to all messages on a first come first serve basis during my office hours on Saturday mornings between 10:00-12:00 a.m. central time (11:00-1:00 pm ET) I will check my campus e-mail periodically during the week. However more immediate responses will occur if you use my regular e-mail address: [jharris@gcumm.org](mailto:jharris@gcumm.org)
- (3) If you can afford the call , I would be glad to talk to you in person or you can leave a voice mail with me by calling my cell phone at 615-415-2319 If our conversation needs to be long call me at that number on the weekends (starting on Fridays after 9:00 pm (CT)), or leave your number so that I can call you back on a land phone line.
- (4) While I might not participate in all discussions, I will monitor all community and team activities and discussions and participate as needed.
- (5) I will check in with you twice during the semester to see how you are doing individually and how you are feeling about your ExL experience.

## **WINDOWS AND ICONS**

While you have been instructed in the use of the items in the CL 553 folder, I will review their uses for this class.

The Course Center: The Course Center will contain a copy of the final official syllabus for our class as well as all our class modules.

The Discussion Center: The Discussion Center will be used for all community communications. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the modules, assignments, or anything else of interest to all of us, you should post it to this place.

The CL 553 XL Office: The CL 553 XL Office is for private correspondence between you and me. Items you do not want to appear before your fellow participants or items you think may embarrass me need to be posted here.

The Archives Center: The Archive Center will be used for storing correspondence that has already been explored during the semester in the Discussion Center. This will be done after the completion of each module and at my discretion.

The Chat Center: The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among participants. You can meet with other members to study, ask questions, or explore topics. None of the conversations in this location are ever saved.

The Resource Center: The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL participants. These include access to Asbury Theological Seminary's B. L. Fisher Library, the services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a PowerPoint Viewer, and a Real Audio player.

Class Teams: Because some of our work throughout the semester will be done in teams, our class will be grouped into three teams:

1. Team Methodists
2. Team Evangelicals
3. Team United Brethren

I will let you know during the modules who is assigned to what team and team activities.

## **X. TECHNICAL AND LIBRARY SUPPORT**

When you have questions about the technical and logistical aspects of this course, please consult a staff member on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. These staff members are unfailingly helpful, and I urge you to contact any of them if you need assistance.

### **ExL Contact Information:**

**For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program, contact:**

Dale Hale

[ExL\\_Office@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu)

Phone: (859) 858-2393

**For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact:**

[Info\\_Commons@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu)

Phone: (859) 858-2233

Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

### **Accessing Information Commons Materials:**

1. General Questions:
  - The Information Commons is a “one-stop shop” for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here:  
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hlours.shtml>.
2. Materials Requests:
  - To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:  
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml>

- ExL Students may request books, photocopies, or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
- ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

### 3. Research Questions:

- ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

### 4. Online Databases:

- To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID number in the login box. Your student ID number is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000xxxxx where xxxxx = your student ID).

Questions relating to the syllabus or course assignments should be directed to me in the CL 553 XL Office (open only to me) or the CL 553 XL Discussion Center (open to me and to all the members of the class). Sometimes, a sentence that is clear to me might not be clear to you. If something in the course is not working, let me know as soon as possible. I desire to make this internet course as helpful to you as possible.

### ABOUT THE PROFESSOR:

Rev. Dr Joseph L. Harris currently serves as the General Secretary for the Commission on United Methodist Men based in Nashville, TN. Dr. Harris is an elder from the Oklahoma Annual Conference. He served several churches in the conference as well as serving eight years as the District Superintendent of the Ardmore District. Dr Harris received his BA degree from the University of Massachusetts and his Masters of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Oral Roberts University Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He has an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Oklahoma City University and has done postdoctoral studies at Alliance School of Theology. Dr. Harris is married to Nancy and has two grown children, Sarah and Joseph II. Dr. Harris has served on numerous annual conference boards and agencies; the General Board of Church and Society, the Good News Board of Directors, Black Methodist for Church Renewal and World Methodist Council. Dr. Harris currently serves on the Connectional Table, the Funding Taskforce II Committee and General Secretaries Table. He has been a General Conference delegate since 1986. He currently serves as a trustee at Asbury Theological Seminary.





**SPRING 2004 Calendar for CL553**  
**General Outline**

| <b>DATE</b>                     | <b>Reading from Discipline*</b> | <b>TOPIC of Class and Reading from Frank*</b>   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Module 1<br>February 7-20       | Pp. v-20                        | Syllabus and Introduction to Polity<br>Historical Considerations in the Formation of UM Polity<br>Chs.1,2   |
| Module 2<br>February 21-March 6 | Pp. 21-86                       | Constitution and Doctrinal Standards<br>Our Theological Task<br>Chs. 3,4  |
| Module 3<br>March 7-20          | Pp. 87-193                      | The Ministry of All Christians<br>The Social Principles<br>The Local Church<br>Chs. 5,6   |
| Module 4<br>March 21-April 3    | Pp. 194-283,                    | The Ministry of the Ordained<br>Ch. 7   |
| Module 5<br>April 4-17          | Pp. 285-350                     | The Superintendency<br>The Conferences General, Jurisdictional and Central<br>Chs. 8,9  |
| Module 6<br>April 18-May 1      | Pp. 351-670                     | The Annual Conferences, Administrative Order, and General Agencies<br>Ch. 10  |
| Module 7<br>May 8-15            | Pp. 671-746                     | Church Property, Judicial Administration<br>Ch. 11,12 and Conclusion<br><i>Date of Final Exam posting will be announced on or before Module 5</i> |
|                                 |                                 | <b>FINAL EXAM WEEK</b><br><b>May 16-20</b>  |

**\*Please note: The readings listed for each date should be completed before each module.**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

The Book of Discipline (2004) (United Methodist Publishing House)

Lyle E. Schaller, The Ice Cube Is Melting, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004)

Thomas Edward Frank, Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997)

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

James V. Heidinger II and Steve Beard Streams of Renewal: Welcoming New Life Into United Methodism, Living Streams Publication, 2004

Various, Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation 2005-2008, Cokesbury 2004

The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2004, the United Methodist Publishing House

## RELATED TEXTS

Campbell, Dennis, The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination (Nashville, Abingdon, 1988)

Campbell, Dennis M., William B. Lawrence, and Russell E. Richey, editors. Doctrine and Davis, Rupert and Rupp, Gordon, A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Vol. 1, "The People called Methodists – 3. Polity," Frank Baker, p. 211-256.

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Harmon, Nolan B, The Organization of the Methodist Church (Nashville, Abingdon, 1962)

Heitzenrater, Richard, Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989)

Hickman, Hoyt, ed., The Worship Resources of the United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989)

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Long, Edward L., Patterns of Polity, Varieties of Church Governance (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001)

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Richey, Russell E., William B. Lawrence, and Dennis M. Campbell, editors. Questions For the Twenty-First Century Church. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.

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Wesley, John, The Works of John Wesley, ed. By Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols., vol 8: Addresses, Essays, Letters, p. 250ff.

## OTHER RESOURCES

Bromily, G., Children of Promise: The Case of Baptizing Infants, Eerdmans, 1979

Campbell, D., Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination, Abingdon, 1988

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Guidelines for Leadership in the Local Church 1985-1988, Abingdon Press, Printed in the USA.

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Heidinger, United Methodist Renewal: What Will It Take, Bristol, 1986

\_\_\_\_\_, ed., Basic United Methodist Beliefs: An Evangelical View, Bristol, 1986

- Hunt, E., A Bishop Speaks His Mind: A Candid View of United Methodism, Abingdon, 1987
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- Johnson and Waltz, Facts and Possibilities: An Agenda for the United Methodist Church, Abingdon, 1987
- Madsen, N., This We Believe: The Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, Graded Press, 1987
- Naglee, D., From Font to Faith: John Wesley on Infant Baptism and the Nurture of Children, Lang 1987 (a very expensive book)
- Rowe, K., United Methodist Studies, Basic Bibliographies, Abingdon, 1987
- Stokes, Mack B., The Bible in Wesleyan Heritage, Abingdon, 1981
- Stokes, Mack B., Major United Methodist Beliefs, Abingdon Press, 1983
- Thomas, Jr., H. O., "John Wesley's Understanding of the Theological Distinction between 'Essentials' and 'Opinion'", Methodist History, 33, no. 3 (April 1995), pp. 139-148.
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